

*Religion and Short  
History of the Sikhs  
1469 to 1930.*



# *Religion and Short History of the Sikhs.* 1469 to 1930.

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(“ Now the English are going,  
whence are pensions coming ? ”)

*Note.*—In the following pages Indian names are usually spelt on the official system.

- a.* Short—pronounced as u in fun.  
Long—pronounced as a in father.
- i.* Short—pronounced as i in pit.  
Long—pronounced as i in police.
- u.* Short—pronounced as u in bush.  
Long—pronounced as oo in pool.

Thus Kaladin pronounced as Kahlahdeen, and Guru pronounced as Gooroo.



Ambulance, 1840-60.

(From an old print.)

## PREFACE.

EIGHTY-ONE years ago, in the early months of 1849, as a little boy nearly five years of age, I stood with others on the east bank of the Sutlej river, watching a long procession of *doolies* and *palkies* (ambulance conveyances, slung on poles, each carried on their shoulders by four kahars) crossing the long bridge of boats across the river, between the British cantonment of Ludiana and the abandoned Sikh fort of Philour.

As they passed us, occasionally an arm and face appeared through the curtains, some white, some brown.

I learnt later that these were the wounded and sick from the great battlefields of the second Sikh war; Chilianwala, Ramnager, Gujrat; the last of which ended the struggle for supremacy in Upper India and the Punjab between the British and the Sikhs.

Eight years later, as a schoolboy, I read the messages reporting the mutiny at Meerut, the mutiny and massacre of Europeans, men, women and children, at Delhi, and other places. I saw the three British regiments starting for Delhi from the hill stations near Simla, and the arrival of English women and children fugitives from Simla, when the Nasserri Battalion of Gurkhas at Jatogh were in a mutinous state, and a few days later parties of Sikh soldiers from Patiala,

## PREFACE—*continued*

with their long beards, strange uniforms, long matchlocks, swords and shields, patrolling the roads against possible bands of mutineers from the plains. Incidentally I captured a spy, a young man unarmed, who, instead of walking openly up a path, was creeping through the bushes to the hill top where I was on scout duty. He was made over to the military, but was, I hope, released, as he showed us boys how to make neat cartridges.

Six years later I crossed the Sutlej and the other Punjab rivers on my way to join the North Western Frontier Survey party, with which I spent many years. My camp was often pitched near Sikh and other Punjabi villages. During several expeditions across the frontier I saw Sikh regiments in camp and in action, and have had small Sikh escorts. Naturally I have always taken an interest in learning all I could about them.

In the following pages much of the early history and religion of the Sikhs was learnt from Cunningham's History of the Sikhs, published in 1846, now probably out of print.

A complete and accurate detail of events in the Punjab between 1913 and 1920 may be obtained in "India as I knew it," by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the highest authority on the troubles and administration of the Punjab.

I am indebted to Mr. Arthur C. Sharp, of Westbourne, Bournemouth, for most of the illustrations, including that of the Golden Temple. They are from snapshots taken by Mr. Sharp in India while serving with Territorials and Punjabis.

# I.

## INTRODUCTION.

IN every chapter of Indian history, during the last century or earlier, prominent mention is made of the Sikhs.

They first came in contact with British troops and military officers during the first Afghan War of 1839-42, when, by virtue of a Tripartite Treaty, they were very doubtful and reluctant allies, and a contingent of Sikh troops, under the command of Lieutenant, (afterwards Sir) Henry Lawrence, accompanied General Pollock's force to Kabul in 1842. Later, from 1845 to '49, they appeared as fierce and sturdy opponents of the British. Next, as brave and loyal soldiers under the Union Jack in many lands: and lastly, a few misled by designing politicians and anarchists as political malcontents and rioters.

Those who have seen an old Sikh regiment on the march, headed by the venerable white-bearded *Granthi*, or chaplain, with his *Granth* or Bible carefully guarded from flies and dust by attendants with whisks of peacock feathers; or have seen the men of the regiment, when expecting to go into action, carefully bathing and

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combing out their long black locks and rolling them up, so that they might die decently, if die they must, cannot have failed to admire their grand physique, their refined features and martial bearing. A closer acquaintance would have shewn them that there existed a strong bond of fellowship between the men and their British officers.

It is therefore natural to ask who are the Sikhs ; and in what do they differ from the hundred and one other races of India ?

It is known that some four thousand years ago a swarm of invaders from Central Asia, now known as Indo-Aryans, with their families, flocks and herds, crossed the Hindu Kush and Afghanistan, and, after first settling in the Punjab, pressed on eastward and southward down the Gangetic Valley and Southern India.

They were a fair, sturdy race, differing entirely from the Kolarian and Dravidian races, the previous occupants, whom they destroyed or drove before them into the wilder hilly and forest tracts, and with whom they determined to have no intermarriage or familiar intercourse.

They worshipped the powers of Nature, to whom the fathers of families offered sacrifices of cattle and sheep, and poured out libations of intoxicating Soma (of which the worshippers freely partook) and chanted hymns and prayers. Later, when the fathers of families were busy fighting, clearing forests and founding villages, cities and kingdoms, the performance of the daily sacrifices

was made over to others, who were succeeded by their sons and son's sons or disciples, and a sacerdotal group or caste became the hereditary priests, who alone were conversant with the correct ritual and intonation of the hymns and prayers, and thus became the sole mediators between the spirits, or gods, and men. As Brahmans, or those who had knowledge, they gradually obtained complete control of the consciences and daily lives of the three other groups into which the community became divided: the Khsatrayas or warriors, including their leaders and princes: the Vaisyas, including the commercial and agricultural classes: and the Sudras, menials and all others not included in the three pure-blooded groups or castes.

About eight or ten centuries B.C., an alphabet was evolved or adopted, and the Brahmans were able to put their traditional hymns and ritual into writing, and compiled first the Rig Vedas: later, from century to century, a vast volume of literature in prose and poetry was compiled.

The original simple worship of the spirits had been converted into an elaborate sacrificial system, and the worship of a Trinity with numerous wives and children and Avatars or incarnations, as well as numerous divine or semi-divine heroes and saints, to whom temples were built in which the wealth of princes and people was accumulated, and images representing the numerous deities were placed. There was also evolved a code of laws, regulations and restrictions on the everyday life of the people from birth to death. Between not only the four great

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groups or castes, but innumerable sub-castes into which they had divided, not only was intermarriage, eating and drinking forbidden, but every member born in any of these groups could not fall from a higher to a lower except by a breach of caste rules and customs ; and no member of a lower caste could rise to a higher, whatever his wealth, learning or social position. These rules and regulations are still in force among Brahmanical Hindus. The evil practices of *Suttee*, or the burning of widows alive in the funeral pyres of their dead husbands ; female infanticide ; human sacrifices, were in full force, authorised or commanded by the sacred writings for which divine inspiration was claimed.

Meanwhile other swarms of invaders from the north-west entered and occupied the Punjab, Jats, Ahirs, Gujars, Gakkhars, Awans and others, from whom the present agricultural races of the Punjab are descended.

From these, especially from the Jats, the Sikhs were recruited. The descendants of the Rajputs who remained mostly in the towns, are now known as Khattris, are chiefly engaged in trade and commerce, and have representatives as grocers, grain dealers and money lenders in nearly every village ; and there are still several petty Rajput states among the outer ranges of the Himalayas, besides the Maharajahs of Jamu and Kashmir.

Gradually the whole of these tribes came under Brahminical influence, and were included in the Hindu pale, though they seem never to have been so com-

pletely under Brahman domination as the Hindus farther east.

Several attempts were made from time to time to weaken the power of the Brahmans and lessen superstition. The most successful of these was that instituted by Prince Siddartha, Sakya Muni, better known as the Gautama Buddha. Buddhism at one time was supreme from Ceylon to Central Asia, but gradually Brahmanism regained its sway after long and cruel persecution of the Buddhists.

In the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., the Arab followers of Mahomed, after suppressing idolatry in Arabia, swept over North Africa and Central Asia. Later, about the year 1000 A.D., Mahmud of Ghazni made twelve successive raids into Northern India, making it his special mission to destroy idols, plunder temples and murder Brahmans. A Mahomedan Empire was established in Delhi, and Viceroys or lesser monarchs ruled in Bengal, Oudh, Central India and the Punjab. In the end Hinduism was swept away westward of the Jhelum and in Kashmir, and many Mahomedan colonies were formed elsewhere.

The victories of Islam weakened the power of the Brahmans, especially in the north-west. The doctrines of the Unity of God and the equality of men before Him, a religion in which a slave may end on a throne, as more than once occurred, appealed to the lower castes and classes, and thousands professed Islam. Among the more thoughtful and educated men Ramanand, Kabir, Gorakhnath, Chaitun and others

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endeavoured to reconcile the antagonistic religions by condemning the cruelty and intolerance of the one and the superstitions and idol worship of the other. Their followers usually ended as monastic or ascetic societies, and never became widely influential or powerful.

## II.

### THE FIRST NINE GURUS, 1469-1675.

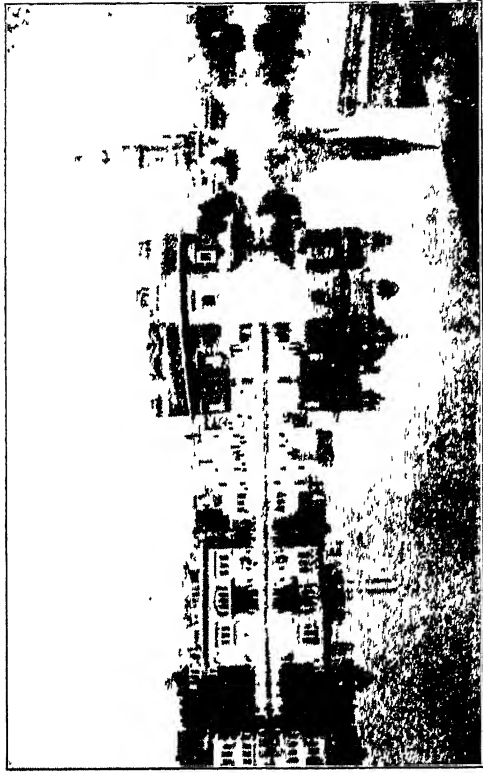
IN 1469, about the time of our "Wars of the Roses," there was born near Lahore Nanak Chand, son of a Khatri. A lad of a serious nature, who early began a study of the Hindu and Moslem Scriptures, he, after a few years of married life, became an ascetic, wandering, it is said, as far as Mecca. There is a legend that an Arab one day found him sleeping with his feet towards Mecca, and angrily asked him how he dare sleep with his feet towards the House of God. Nanak, in reply, asked the Arab if he could tell him where the House of God was not.

After some years he returned to his village and his family, saying he had searched *Purans* and *Korans* but found no God in them. "God," he said, "is truth, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth." He is infinite and invisible, no material likeness of Him is possible. All men are born equal, caste must be abolished, idols abandoned. All men are brothers. God alone can give grace to turn men to righteousness. Righteousness consists of virtuous living, works of charity, constant

prayer All should fight for the faith, but with no weapons save the Word of God. They should be tolerant of other religions and their faults. God has sent many prophets into the world. none should be called imposters. Respect temples and sacred rivers but bow to none but God. Ascetism, pilgrimages, shrines are not necessary. Let every man live happily with his family and do his duty. Sin must be repented of early: deathbed repentance is of little use. If sin is not repented of here, it must be expiated in future lives. Heinous sin may bring the doom of being re-born a "beast."

He adhered to the Hindu doctrine of the transmigration or reincarnation of every human soul until perfection is reached, and held that the conditions, joys and sorrows of each successive life are dependent on the *Karma* or actions committed in this or some former life. He continued the practice of cremation of the dead, but denounced suttee and female infanticide.

Such were the main doctrines of Nanak Chand. He claimed no divine inspiration, no miraculous powers. He was but a *Guru*, or teacher: his followers were *Sikhs*, scholars, learners (from the Hindi verb *sikhna*, to learn). He never quite gave up the legends of the Hindu pantheon, but declined to accord any divinity to Avatars or Heroes. He abstained from meat and tobacco and held the cow sacred. The purity and simplicity of his life appealed principally to the peasantry. He spoke and wrote in the Punjabi vernacular, henceforward known as *Gurmukhi*—the



Golden Temple, Amritsar.

teacher's voice. He gathered only a small following round him, but his teachings spread their influence over a wide area. He died at the age of seventy.

Before half a century had passed the simple teacher was proclaimed to be a divine emanation, a son of God, and numerous miracles were attributed to him. About twenty miles west of Rawalpindi, on the road to Peshawar, stands an isolated hill about 300 feet in elevation above the base. On the top is the shrine of a Moslem saint, Hasan Abdal. A pretty village and gardens lie at the west foot of the hill round a masonry tank or pool of clear water, which issues from a spring under a large rock. On the face of the rock above the pool is a small human hand carved in relief. I asked how it came there and was told the following story :—

The spring of water was originally on the crest of the hill near the shrine. One day Guru Nanak, when travelling, arrived hot and thirsty at the foot of the hill and called to the saint for a drink. The saint scornfully replied, "Such a holy man as you ought to be able to order a supply to come to you." Instantly the spring ceased at the top and came out from under the rock where Nanak was sitting. The saint angrily ordered the hill to fall on and crush Nanak. As it leaned over to do so, Nanak put out his hand and ordered it to go back, which it did. "That's where the Guru put his hand."

"But," I said, "the mark of the hand should have been impressed into the rock, not carved outward."

However, that was a detail not worth troubling about.

Nanak left two sons, but appointed as his successor a devoted disciple named Lehna, who succeeded as *Guru Angad*. The sons seceded and founded the ascetic sect of *Udassis* (the mournful ones) midway between Bradmanism and Sikhism—of whom more later. Their descendants have always been revered by Sikhs.

Nine Gurus succeeded Nanak during the following centuries, some nominated by their predecessors, some elected by the community. Several sons and disciples of the Gurus who were not elected or appointed to be the chief spiritual leaders in succession to Nanak and the others, seceded and formed sects, like the *Udassis*, under their own leadership in doctrines partly Brahminical, partly Sikh. They mostly ended in forming small communities round particular temples, or as ascetic societies. Such are, besides the *Udassis*, the *Minas*, *Ramdassis*, *Bihdis*, *Lodhis*, *Bandaparths* and others, many at present in conflict with the *Akhalis*.

It is interesting to watch the gradual change of a peaceful sect into a military power, largely owing to persecution.

*Angad* continued preaching on the same lines as Nanak, from whose writings, prayers and precepts he compiled the *Adi Granth*, or first bible of the Sikhs, copies of which, held in great veneration, are placed in every *Dharmshala*, or Sikh place of worship.

The third Guru *Umar Das* denounced the *Udassis* as heretics, and specially preached against *Suttee*, the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

"She is the true Suttie whom grief, not flames, consume."

Already it began to be whispered that the inspired, immortal spirit of Nanak was in all the Gurus.

*Ramdas*, the fourth Guru, built a little temple and excavated a tank or reservoir round it which he called *Amrit Sar*—the lake or water of life, and encouraged Sikhs to come there and wash away their sins and give alms for religious purposes.

The ritual of worship in the temple is very simple. Of course all who enter remove any leather shoes or slippers. On entering, facing the door sits the Baba or Bhai on a carpet behind the sacred Granth, which is usually covered with cloth of gold; an attendant keeps off flies and dust with a whisk of peacock feathers. On one side are a party of Rubabis with small drums, cymbals and rubabs, a kind of guitar or violin, who play on their instruments and chant prayers.

Worshippers enter, either kneeling or bowing low, place their alms and donations before the Granth, then seven times perambulate round the space occupied by the Granth and Granthi from right to left. Then, bowing again, retire backwards through the door.

English visitors used to be welcome on removing their boots and putting on felt slippers provided for them.

Of course, a fee was expected.

So far the number of Sikhs was very limited, though half a century had passed. But a great change followed.

*Arjun*, the fifth Guru, seemed at once to grasp the importance of Nanak's teaching as being a religion, not a

sect, and how applicable it was to all states of life and all conditions of men. He made visits to Amritsar obligatory on all his disciples, re-arranged the writings of his predecessors, adding portions from other sources for his new *Adi Granth*, organised a priestly establishment, and made alms-giving to the temple compulsory, sending out agents to collect the offerings and extend the preaching of the doctrines.

One of his disciples, Guru Dass, openly taught that Nanak was a divinely commissioned successor of Mahomed and all the prophets, sent by God as a regenerator of mankind. He sternly and openly denounced Moslem bigotry and cruelty and Hindu superstition, calling all to worship the one God to whom Nanak had been the witness. Though Arjun was not prepared to go so far, he, too, had an exalted idea of his position as a religious monarch, had, by collection of alms, together with a trade in horses, accumulated wealth, enlarged the temple at Amritsar, and maintained some state. He declined an alliance with Chendu Shah, an influential official at Lahore, thereby incurring his enmity, and gave him an opportunity of bringing an accusation against him by in some way assisting Prince Khusru in revolt against his father, the Emperor Jehangir—which resulted in Arjun's imprisonment, the rigours of which injured his health and caused his death. According to later legend, he escaped from prison, threw himself into the Ravi and was thence carried straight to heaven.

Thus to the worshippers of a divine teacher had been

given a sacred volume, a central place of worship, and a ritual, and now had been given a martyr and a spirit of opposition. Arjun's eldest son, Pirthi Chand, was rejected by the elders, and, seceding, started the sect of Minas, who steadily opposed the younger son, *Har Govind*, who was elected as the sixth Guru. This Guru spent his earlier years at the Imperial Court of Delhi, and served for a time in the army. Then, for nearly twenty years, he retired to the hills in the north and became a famous hunter, and, unlike his predecessors, ate the flesh of game, a practice still followed by the Sikhs. Beef, however, was still forbidden. Meanwhile, he had been nursing revenge for the sufferings of his father, and was further embittered by a short imprisonment of himself for breaking some game laws. Gathering round him a considerable following, not excluding outlaws, and accumulating wealth by contributions, plunder and trading, he built a strong fort, organised his followers into strong bodies of cavalry under capable leaders, then, openly throwing off his allegiance, he attacked and defeated lesser Moslem chieftains and detachments of Imperial troops.

During the disturbances which followed on the death of Jehangir, Hargovind is said to have raided on Lahore and to have abducted the daughter of the Moslem governor, and he defeated several detachments sent in pursuit, thereby greatly adding to his prestige and following. Though relentless in revenge, he was more of a warrior than a religious zealot. His ideas seem to have hovered between the doctrine of *Maya*, or all is

delusion, and Pantheism. It is related that a Brahman once said to him, "If the world and God are one, then you and that ass are one," but the Guru only laughed.

Whatever his faults, Hargovind was adored by his followers, and at his death a Jat and a Rajput shared his funeral pyre, and others would have done the same but for the remonstrances of the next Guru, *Haridas*, who was a simple preacher. But the popular belief that the Guru was a spiritual king aroused the anger and the suspicion of the fanatical Emperor Aurngzebe, and the Guru was arrested and imprisoned on the charge of having assisted Prince Darah Shikoh in the struggle for the throne.

On his death a dispute arose as to which of the two sons of the late Guru should succeed him. Strangely enough, the Emperor was asked to arbitrate, and appointed a younger son named *Harkishen*, a boy of six, who died of smallpox shortly after. Pirthi Chand, son of Arjun, was again rejected by the elders, whose choice fell on *Tegh Babadur*, a son of Hargovind, for whom the claim was now generally admitted that he was in very truth a *Sacha Badshah*—a true spiritual king. By his rivals and enemies he was accused of being a disturber of the peace. On this charge he was arrested and sent to Aurungzebe at Delhi, who appears to have been puzzled and annoyed by the claim to kingship, as a similar claim had puzzled Pilate and Herod many centuries earlier. Foreseeing his doom, Tegh Bahadur sent for his son, belted on him his own sword, gave him the sheaf of arrows which went with

his summonses to his followers, and begged the lad not to let his father's body be eaten by dogs. On arrival at Delhi, having refused to abjure Sikhism and profess Islam, he was executed, and his limbs were stuck up in various parts of the city.

Among the numbers of low-caste Hindus who had, since the Mahomedan domination, become Musselmans, were large communities of sweepers and outcastes, who were known as *Mazhabis*, or the faithful. Some of these had later joined the Sikh community in which the caste system was nominally suppressed, and the same name was applied to these after a party of them had gone to Delhi, gathered up the scattered remains of the Guru and brought them to his son. The name has since become famous owing to the courage and devotion of the Mazbi Sikh regiments in the British Indian Army, especially the 23rd and 32nd Mazbi Pioneers. The body of Tegh Bahadur was duly cremated, and then the son was hurried away to the hills, from which, after several years' wandering, studying the scriptures, visiting (unknown) Patna and other cities, and nursing his revenge, he emerged as the tenth, last and greatest of the Gurus—Guru *Govind*, who had conceived the almost impossible idea of overthrowing the Moslem Moghal Empire, and establishing a spiritual Sikh Empire.



### III.

## GOVIND, THE TENTH GURU, 1675-1708.

THE best account of Govind's life, opinions and adventures, is given in a volume written by himself and received by his disciples as equal to the *Adi Granth*. As the "*Daswan Guru ki Granth*," or Book of the Tenth Guru, it is always placed with the other in their temples and is considered equally inspired.

Govind relates that his unembodied spirit, before birth on earth, reposed in bliss, meditating and longing to appear on earth as the chosen of the Lord. That many teachers had come but had procured worship for themselves and fallen into error. Then the soul of Nanak had inflamed his soul as one torch inflames another, and he was born and manifested as man, to teach a new religion, extend virtue, destroy evil. But should any pay him divine honours, they would perish in hell. God was not to be found in *Purans* or *Korans* or in idols, but in honesty and sincerity.

Thus far his teachings differ little from those of Nanak, but he was about to institute a great change. According

to tradition he saw in a vision the Hindu goddess of war, Durga, to whom he presented his sword. She told him that the Sikh religion would prevail throughout the world, but that, as he trembled on meeting her, it would not be accomplished in his time. She pointed to an iron axe in a flame, and said with *Loh* (iron or steel) he would prevail.

Assembling his followers, he made his vision known to them. Henceforth they would no longer be individual Sikhs, but one mystical body, the *Khalsa*—God's chosen—in which would reside the soul that had been in Nanak and in all the Gurus. No image could be made of the invisible God, but He would be in the *Khalsa*. Caste must be abolished, Brahmans must throw aside their idols and the sacred thread. Temples and rivers should be held sacred, but not as divine. The Turks (Mahomedans) must be destroyed, their temples neglected. All true members of the *Khalsa* must be invested with the *Pahal*.

Calling together five of his disciples of different castes and races, he placed two bowls of water before them. In one he mixed five kinds of sweets with a double-edged dagger (in the case of females a single-edged dagger is used) and bade the five to drink of it. From the other bowl he sprinkled their heads and beards. Then they did the same for him. Then Govind said, "Wherever five (*panch*) of the *Khalsa* meet, there will be my spirit with them." This is the initiation ceremony which all Sikhs must undergo before they become members of the *Khalsa*. Novitiates are exhorted to



worship one God, to be always truthful and sincere, to be pure, faithful unto death, to slay all enemies of the Khalsa, always to carry arms, or at least wear iron. Never to cut hair or beard, wear black clothes, or at least black turbans, to honour the name of Nanak and all the Gurus ; bow to none but the Granth, which they should read daily, at least the morning and evening prayers · to bathe frequently, at Amritsar when possible, to abjure all heretics and *Kuri Mars* (daughter killers ; ) to salute each other with the words, "*Wah ! Guru ji ki fateh. Wah ! Khalsa ji ki fateh.*" "(Victory to the Guru. Victory to the Khalsa.)

Five symbols were to be worn by which they would be distinguished from others—the five K's.

Kesh—the hair never to be cut.

Kanga—the comb.

Kuch—a pair of shorts, emblem of decency and purity.

Kaura—an iron bangle, emblem of faithfulness.

Kirpan—sword, knife or dagger, as defenders of the faith.

No true Khalsa should ever be without these.

There seems to have been no reason except as a distinguishing mark for not cutting the hair. Most Hindus and Moslems shave some part of the head · or for wearing dark clothes except as in contrast with the sacred yellow of the Hindus and the green and white of the Moslem : or for refraining from smoking, except that both Hindus and Moslems invite a newcomer to have a smoke. Neither liquor nor drugs are forbidden, probably because they are forbidden to Moslems and

high caste Hindus. To the Sikh, as to all Hindus, the cow is sacred.

On one occasion a Sikh regiment doing a route march on the N.W. frontier was attacked by a strong body of Pathans, who fired at them over the backs of cattle they had driven along between them. Though several of the Sikhs were shot, they never returned the fire, steadily continuing their march. The Sikh's opportunity came later, and they took it—with interest.

After receiving the *Pahal*, the novice is no longer a Sikh or scholar only, he is *Singh*, a lion, and is entitled to affix that word to his name whatever his previous caste. Thus he is declared equal to the Rajput, to whom only the affix had been applied previously. Despite the efforts of the Gurus, the distinction of castes has not been obliterated.

Govind's next step was to call a general council of elders—the *Gurumatha*—which was to meet at Amritsar if possible, to regulate the civil and military affairs of the Khalsa. Having thus consolidated and roused the enthusiasm of his followers, he organized them into bands under able leaders, and commenced his long meditated struggle with the Imperial power, having first built some strong forts on which to retire when defeated. An inner guard was formed of the most devoted of his followers, those who adhered most closely to his injunctions. These fierce fanatics acted as "forlorn hopes" in attack, reserves in retreat. In addition to the prescribed salutation they added the war cry of *Akhal Akhal*—the one—hence the name *Akhali* so

often heard of since. The Akhalis usually pile up their hair in pyramidal form and place round it a succession of steel quoits with sharp edges which they used at times in street fighting with deadly effect.

Though at first victorious over lesser chiefs and detachments of Imperial troops, Govind was defeated again and again by the strong divisions sent against him. The bulk of his force was cavalry unable to stand against large bodies of disciplined infantry supported by artillery. Driven from post to post, besieged in his forts in succession which were reduced by famine or taken by assault, his followers melted away. His two elder sons were killed in action in his sight. His mother and two younger sons were treacherously murdered at Sirhind, where they had sought shelter. Repeated misfortunes deranged his intellect, almost alone he wandered as a hunted animal from place to place, and was finally assassinated on the Godaverī river in Southern India by Pathans whose father he had killed after an insult. The murderers were seized by the Guru's attendants, but the Guru ordered their release, and commended them for revenging the murder of their father.

Asked when dying to appoint a successor, he is said to have replied :

“ It was prophetically ordained that there should be only ten Gurus ; I am the last. Henceforth wherever five of the Khalsa meet, there will my spirit, that of all the Gurus, be with them.”

Thus passed away the last and greatest of all the Gurus.

Sikh and Khalsa spiritual leaders have since been known as *Baba* — elder, or *Bhai* — brother, or as *Granthi* — expounder of the Granth. The last is usually applied to Sikh chaplains of regiments. Secular leaders were usually styled Rajah or Sirdar.

Govind died in 1708. A devoted follower named Bandha, or the slave, led back the remnant of the Khalsa to the Punjab and there gradually and quietly collecting adherents, awaited the death of the aged Aurangzebe. On the death of the Emperor the usual struggle for supremacy between rival Princes followed. The Mah-rattas were driving the Moghal armies from Central India : the whole Empire became disorganized. Under these circumstances, Bandha, with a considerable force burst with fire and sword over the province of Sirhind between the Sutlej and the Jumna, and with fearful atrocities avenged the murder of Govind's little sons. Had the Sikhs, instead of scattering for plunder, pushed on straight for Delhi, the whole course of Indian history might have been changed. A Sikh Empire might have succeeded the Moghals. At length Bahadur Shah, having defeated his rivals, called up his armies from the South and drove the Sikhs back across the Sutlej ; and his successor Ferokh Shah drove them from their strongholds, shot them down wherever they were found and totally dispersed them. Bandha and several hundred of his followers were captured ; the greater number were killed on the spot, but Bandha with some

hundreds were marched off towards Delhi. One hundred were executed at each stage. An idea of what manner of men they were may be got from an extract from a Mahomedan writer of the period .

“ It is singular that these people not only behaved firmly during their execution, but disputed and wrangled with each other as to who should be slain first, and even made interest with the executioners to obtain preference. Bandha was produced last, his son being seated in his lap. The father was ordered to cut his son's throat, which he did without uttering a word. Then his flesh was torn from him with red hot pincers and in torment his black soul took its flight through one of the wounds and went to the regions for which it was so well fitted.”

Bandha's main object was revenge ; he was a brave but fiercely cruel leader and his memory is not held sacred by the Sikhs. A fierce persecution and pursuit of the various bands followed. Thousands discarding the Khalsa symbols, returned to their homes. Those who still adhered to the faith fled into the wilder hilly and desert tracts. For twenty years no more was heard of them. But brighter days were coming. The mysterious tie of the Khalsa, the Pahal, was not forgotten. In silence they awaited the return of the spirit of Nanak and Govind to rouse them and lead them to victory.



#### IV.

### SIKH SECTS.

THE tenth Guru, as we have seen, instituted the ceremony of Pahal or initiation, and added a second volume to the Granth. But those initiated did not include all who retained, and whose descendants still retain, the Sikh name. Those who took the Pahal were enrolled in the one mystical body of the Khalsa, the Sikh militant, and this body in the struggle for freedom from Moslem tyranny might be likened to Cromwell's Ironsides. The Akhali would represent the 'Fifth Monarchy Men,' stern and uncompromising, firmly believing in the righteousness of their cause, insisting on the right to equality for all, guided more by the decisions of the Panch, or Committee of Five, than by their nominal leaders, and watching those leaders with jealous eyes lest they should assume absolute power. Large numbers of Sikhs never took the Pahal nor accepted the precepts of the Tenth Guru, though acknowledging the inspiration of the other Nine. They are known as the *Sihajdari* Sikhs. Others again seceded from the main body to follow the sons of Gurus who had been debarred

from the spiritual leadership. Such are the Udassis, Minas, etc. Perhaps the most original of the Sikh sects is or was that of the Nikalsenis, who believed that General John Nicholson \* was a divine incarnation possessed by the spirit of Guru Nanak, and all the gurus. Though he never took the "pahal," his devout worshippers made long journeys merely to see him and worship him in spite of his vigorous protests. The leaders of the sects usually became ascetics, occupied temples and shrines established on the sites of their Gurus' cremations or at their birthplaces, and known as *Gurudwaras* or gates. Such gradually obtained large grants of land and accumulated gifts from Princes and other notables. Some were, some were not, celibate, but in either case the rule was that a Mahant or high priest of a shrine should be succeeded in office by a specially chosen *Chela* or disciple, not by his own son or relative. It is necessary to consider these distinctions to understand the reasons for the present disturbances among the Sikhs of the Punjab. Though these sects are considered heretical and are as much Brahminical Hindus as Sikhs, all claim to be and register themselves as Sikhs. Though the great majority of the Sikhs live in

\* Nicholson, after serving as a subaltern in the first Afghan and the Sikh wars, and holding administrative civil and military appointments in the Punjab and on the frontier, finally led a column to reinforce the rapidly diminishing British force before Delhi in 1857. His arrival put fresh spirit into the wearied soldiers suffering from constant fighting, cholera, fever and dysentery in the fearful heat and heavy monsoon rains. He led the assault on the city, and was shot down leading his men to victory.



Gate entrance, Golden Temple, Amritsar.

the Punjab, they have representatives in all parts of India and in Burmah. Their spirit of adventure and fondness for trade has taken many to Canada, the states of America and elsewhere, and as police they go to China and British possession in Eastern seas.

The prominence of the Sikhs in the history of the Punjab tends to give the impression that they form the majority of the population. But, as a fact, this is an example of how a united and determined minority can overrrule a disunited majority. The total number of Sikhs of all sects barely exceeds three millions, whereas the total population of the Punjab is between twenty-five and thirty millions. Of these about half are Mahomedans, who comprise the entire agricultural population west of the Jhelum, and in considerable tracts east of that river. The lower ranges of the Himalayas are occupied by Rajput tribes such as the Dogras and others, some Mahomedan, some Hindu. In the towns, besides the banking and trading Hindu Khattris, are large numbers of Hindu and Mahomedan low class handicraftsmen and labourers, weavers, dyers, potters, from whom are collected riotous mobs by agitators.

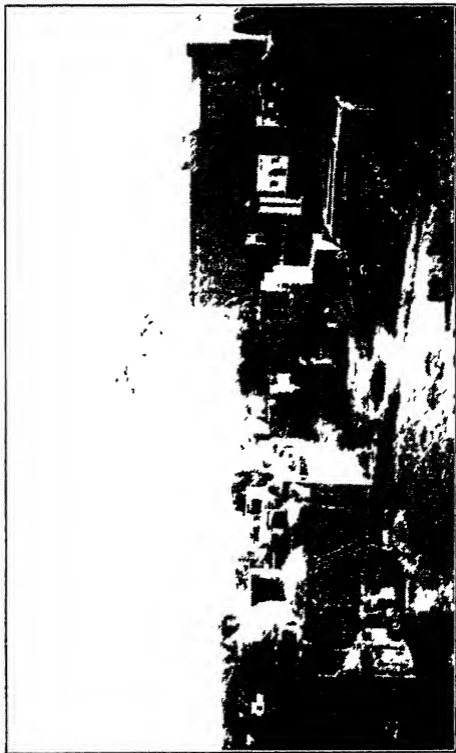


## THE SIKH MONARCHY, 1799-1849.

AFTER the death of Bandha the Sikhs were hunted and dispersed for twenty years. The Moghal Empire was then tottering. Civil wars, revolts of Viceroys, victories of the Mahrattas, rebellions of Jats and Rohillas, had left but the semblance of power at Delhi. Then came Nadir Shah, who, having started life as a bandit, became the sovereign of an Empire extending from the Euphrates to the Indus. Sweeping across the Punjab he captured Delhi, slaughtered a hundred thousand of its inhabitants, and started back westwards followed by miles of baggage animals laden with loot. Of this, bodies of Sikh cavalry, collecting, took a large share. On the assassination of Nadir, an Afghan general, Ahmad Shah Durani, established an Afghan kingdom, and in the middle of the 18th century, like his predecessors, seven times invaded Northern India, destroying idols, plundering temples and murdering Sikhs and Brahmans and leaving anarchy behind him. Now the time of the Khalsa had come. Bands under Bhais and Sirdars swept over the country.

Each band took possession of such tracts as lay nearest its centre, built forts, and, when not busy with Ahmad Shah's baggage, attacked such Imperial troops as remained. At length one, *Jassa Singh*, a distiller, became a noted leader. He proclaimed that the Khalsa were no longer free lances, but an organised military body, the *Dal*, a belligerent nation. Other leaders, grocers, carpenters, oilmen, men of all trades, besides yeomen from the countryside, rallied bands and fought fiercely, so well had Govind and the Pahal amalgamated discordant elements for a time. Amritsar, the sacred centre, was captured and re-captured, the temple and holy tank defiled with bodies of men and cows, and re-purified as Moslem or Sikh prevailed.

When Ahmad Shah, after annexing the Punjab, and leaving there a Moslem governor, returned to his mountains for the last time, the governor was expelled and the several bands of Sikhs seized and divided among themselves the whole of the plains between the Jhelum and the Jumna. The several states or confederacies were known as *Misls*, a Persian word meaning "alike" (applied also to a court file of papers). Theoretically the lands occupied belonged to each and every member of the Khalsa. Practically, the boldest leaders formed principalities, nominally twelve. Then began a mutual struggle for supremacy. In time the chief of Patiala, east of the Sutlej, became the recognised leader of the east, or cis-Sutlej states, Jhind, Nabha, Keonthal and others, known as the Malwa or Phulkian Sikhs. The states west of the Sutlej were known as the Manjah—



Lahore City.

from the delta between the Beas and the Ravi where their principal cities lie.

The struggle to the west of the Sutlej ended in Ranjit Singh, Bhanghi, welding the whole into a Khalsa kingdom. Though known to history and outsiders as Maharajah, or great king, of the Punjab, Ranjit, among his own people, and especially the Akhalis, claimed to be but a servant of the Khalsa, chosen to be their leader by the *Dal*. His method of government was simple. With a strong following he visited each state in turn and received a *nazar*, or present, for state expenses and for religious purposes. The chiefs of states in like manner received nazars from their subordinates, who in turn received presents from the headmen of villages, Sikh, Hindu and Moslem, in their respective circles. Civil and social laws were those long recognised as the *dustoor* (custom) in the several localities. The non-payment of nazar, and attempts at independence, were state crimes, to be rigorously punished.

Meanwhile, Lord Lake and Sir Arthur Wellesley had defeated and dispersed the Mahrattas. The Moghal Emperor, released from confinement, placed himself under the protection of the "Company Bahadur." The Phulkian Sikh states, fearing Mahrattas from the south, Gurkhas from the north and the ambition of Ranjit Singh from the west, followed the lead of the Emperor, and the River Sutlej, and the Lower Indus, became, for all practical purposes, the boundary of British India. Ranjit was warned to confine his energies in other directions. In 1809 a treaty of amity and

goodwill was arranged between Ranjit and the Indian Government, which, on the whole, was honourably acted up to on both sides up to the death of Ranjit in 1839.

By wise diplomacy and able leadership, Ranjit had obtained supremacy over the Sikh states: only by the same could he hope to retain it. He must find employment for his soldiers, especially the Akhalis, or they might turn against him. Prevented from crossing the Sutlej he turned his attention towards the north-west and south, where Moslem supremacy was still maintained. But he first organised his forces, and took as his model the British forces he had seen on the Sutlej. He had been impressed by the defeat of a fierce band of Akhalis by a small British escort. Hitherto the bulk of the Sikh forces had been cavalry. He decided to discipline more infantry and collect artillery. Beginning with a few regiments of infantry and some guns, he secured the services of able French and Italian officers, Ventura, Allard, Avitabile, Court and others. and employing sepoy N.C. officers who had retired from the British service, he gradually organised a considerable force and commenced a campaign against the Afghans, whom he drove from Kashmir and trans-Jhelum across the Indus to their own mountains.

Having driven out the Afghan armies, Ranjit started to settle the Jats, Awans, Gakhars and numerous other tribes that occupied the salt range, the ravine districts of the Jhelum, Rawal Pindi and the mountains of Hazara: also the Pathans and Baluchis across the Indus. He found this no easy task. Large armies

from which the peasantry fled into the more inaccessible tracts, could not find supplies for a lengthy stay. Small forts were built at strategical points, and small garrisons left in them to extract tribute or revenue. On the departure of the main bodies, these forts would be attacked, water and supplies cut off, then assaulted and the entire garrisons murdered with cruel and degrading tortures. Avenging troops would return and retaliate. The atrocities committed by both sides resembled those depicted on ancient Assyrian and Persian tablets—impaling, crucifying, burning, burying or flaying alive. Racial and religious animosities had full swing. Gradually Ranjit's troops gained the mastery, but after his death the tribes again revolted and only on the arrival of British officers were the horrors stayed.

Subsequent events must be briefly described. The death of Ranjit in 1839 was followed by five years of strife and anarchy. His widows, reputed sons, ambitious and designing ministers and chieftains, struggled for supremacy. Each claimant in turn offered donations and more liberal salaries to any troops aiding his cause. The army, regardless of their nominal leaders, appointed committees of five (panchayets). Each brigade, regiment, company, had its own Panch, and took orders from them alone. The army became dictators, a cross between Roman Praetorians and Fifth Monarchy men. The successive Maharajahs, Regents and Prime Ministers were all in turn killed in action, assassinated or executed by orders of the Panch.

Finally, in 1844-5, Dhulip Singh, a boy, reputed son of Ranjit Singh, was declared Maharajah, and his mother, Jindan, Regent, with one Lal Singh, her favourite, as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief. Though they sold their services to the various claimants for supremacy, the Khalsa Panchayets kept a strict eye on the frontiers, and any attempt at revolt or aggression was met by the speedy despatch of troops to oppose it. Towards India they looked as the most probable side from which danger was to be apprehended. Nothing could convince them that a Power which had gradually but steadily advanced from the sea to the Sutlej would stop there. There were minor causes of friction, and the destruction of a British Indian Brigade beyond the Khyber had shewn that the British could be defeated. These suspicions were encouraged by the Court party. Rani Jindan is reported to have said :

“ If the Khalsa cross the Sutlej, whether victorious or defeated, we shall be well rid of them.”

So, in 1845, the Army Panch decided that the best way to avert invasion was to invade, and some 30,000 disciplined infantry, with 200 guns and large bodies of cavalry, crossed the Sutlej, and the Governor General, Lord Hardinge, declared war.

There is no need to go into the fierce and often indecisive battles on the Sutlej in 1845-46, Ferozshanr, Mudki, Aliwal, Sobraon, nor into those fought after a year's cessation, owing to the revolt against British domination, across the Chenab, Chilianwala and Ramnagar, ending in the final and complete defeat of the Khalsa

at Gujrat, the surrender of their army at Rawalpindi, and the annexation of the Punjab. A story used to be told of an amusing incident of the last battle (Gujrat). Lord Gough placed his confidence in the bayonet, and in previous battles had never allowed time for the artillery to take full effect before ordering the line to advance. Before Gujrat a promise had been extracted from him to let the artillery play for two hours before pushing on the infantry. In a quarter of an hour he became impatient and was persuaded to go on to the roof of a hut in the fields to see the effect of the artillery. As soon as he was up, the ladder was removed, and the General left swearing and fuming till the Afghan auxiliaries were in full flight, and the Sikhs looking demoralised, and then the whole line advanced.

The following was a comment on the merits of the two armies by an old Sikh soldier, who had fought against us in those battles:

“ Sahib, our infantry was more numerous than yours, nearly as good as the British soldiers, better than your sepoys, our cavalry was more mobile, our guns heavier and well served. There was just one difference, and that gave you the victory. Whereas our sirdars kept well behind the line and called out ‘ *chalo bhai chalo* ’ (go on, brothers), your little boy officers rushed ahead and called ‘ *chale ao, chale ao* ’ (Come on).”

In looking back at Indian history, it will be seen that the only native armies that stood their ground before British troops on fairly equal terms were the Mahratta and Sikh armies that had been disciplined

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and, till the struggle commenced, commanded by European officers, generally French and Italian. The Sikhs, under their Gurus and other leaders, were invariably finally defeated and dispersed by the Moghal troops. After each defeat thousands returned to their homes, leaving only a nucleus of the most stalwart to await better times ; and only on the complete disruption of the Empire did the Khalsa rise into importance.

## VI.

# PUNJAB UNDER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY, 1849-1859.

AFTER the British annexation decided on by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India, the administration of the Punjab was placed in the hands of a Board, consisting of Sir Henry Lawrence as President, Mr. John Lawrence (afterwards Lord Lawrence of the Punjab) and Mr. Mansel, both of the Civil Service as members, while under them were placed several young British civil and military officers, chosen for the services by the Governor General. Henry Lawrence was already well acquainted with the Punjab and its Sirdars and soldiers, having commanded a contingent of Sikh troops that had accompanied General Pollock's force to Kabul in 1842. He was averse to the annexation of the province after the first Sikh war, and rather doubtful of the wisdom or justice of the policy after the second war. He sympathised greatly with the fallen Sirdars and great landholders who had lost their all, but none the less set to work wholeheartedly to bring peace and prosperity to the conquered people.

Roads were started in every direction, as well as canals and other public works. For the defence of the frontier from the late Khalsa armies were recruited several infantry and cavalry regiments, also several regiments of military police to restore order. Dacoits and other disturbers of the peace were hunted down. A fresh equitable assessment of land revenue was announced at reduced rates, which, even so, promised soon to be sufficient to cover the cost of administration.

On this point of revenue, however, Sir Henry and his brother disagreed. The former on the principle that if the chiefs—the aristocracy—were made loyal to the new government, the people would be loyal. John Lawrence considered it of the first importance to make the peasantry loyal, when it would not matter much whether the impoverished chiefs were loyal or not.

Apparently Sir Henry would have preferred to replace several of the leading Sirdars in possession of their former estates and *Jaghirs* as feudatories of the Crown, like those of the cis-Sutlej states that had voluntarily placed themselves under British protection during the Mahratta wars of the early years of the 19th century, which are still in existence.

But Lord Dalhousie and John Lawrence considered that this would so reduce the revenue payable to the British Government that it would not suffice to pay for its defence and administration. It ended in Sir Henry being transferred to Rajputana, and Sir John being appointed Chief Commissioner and later Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab.



Charge of Sikh Cavalry, 1857.

Subsequent events still leave it somewhat doubtful as to which was the better policy.

Eight years had hardly elapsed since the annexation when the great mutiny of the Bengal army occurred in 1857. To besiege a walled city defended by about 50,000 disciplined mutinous sepoys and some 30 to 40,000 undisciplined but fanatical Mahomedans, with some hundred pieces of artillery, the British Indian Government could only muster on the Ridge before Delhi barely 4,000 British and 500 Gurkhas, with a few batteries of field guns.

But so firmly, justly and sympathetically had those great men, the Lawrences, and their British assistants and friends, Montgomery, Edwardes, Lake and several more good men and true, ruled the Punjab and the more eastern Sikh states, that John Lawrence boldly appealed to the Phulkian Sikh Princes to do their duty, and within a fortnight the soldiers of Patiala, Nabha, Jhind, Kapurthala (west of Sutlej) and others, were patrolling the roads and keeping open communications between Lahore and Delhi, in strong contrast with the troops of the Mahratta princes Sindia, Holkar and others, who joined the rebels, though their chiefs were too loyal or too cautious to go with them.

In the Punjab, Sikhs and Punjabis in John Lawrence's service went out to recruit. In July and August several regiments of Sikhs, Punjabi Mahomedans and Pathans under Nicholson, Daly and others, were marching to Delhi under the Union Jack. In September they swarmed shoulder to shoulder with their British com-

rades over the gates and walls of Delhi, and later those of Lucknow and other rebellious cities.

The Pathan regiments were recruited mostly in the Peshawar and Kohat districts. The disturbances in India naturally aroused unrest in Afghanistan and among all the N.W. Frontier tribes. In Afghanistan itself, the Amir Dost Mahomed nobly abided by his treaty with the British Government, despite all the trouble and suffering he had undergone during the unprovoked first Afghan war, before his return to his throne, and prevented his subjects from all acts of aggression across the frontier. But he had little or no control over the border tribes.

Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of Peshawar, backed up by Sir Sidney Cotton in military command, Major James, Deputy Commissioner, and others, declined to obey the order of John Lawrence to retire across the Indus and to invite Dost Mahomed to take over the trans-Indus districts. Edwardes appealed to Lord Canning, the Governor General at Calcutta. He argued that while both ends of the carpet (India) were held, the whole was held, but once an end began rolling up, nothing could prevent it being rolled to the other end.

Lord Canning fortunately agreed with him. Meantime, sending for several of the tribal chiefs, he said :

“ If you want to loot, bring in your young fellows to enlist and we will send you on to Delhi, but if you try looting here, you will regret it.”

So they joined up in thousands, and went on with the others to Delhi and Lucknow.

The Guides and other regiments of the previously organised Frontier Force of course marched off at the start.

In this case princes and people proved equally loyal to the British, so there was nothing to show whether the policy of Henry or of John Lawrence was the better one. In a province large, fertile and densely populated by an industrious peasantry John's has proved successful—so far. But in wilder tracts, like those of the border tribes and Baluchistan, Henry's—now known as the Sandeman system—has proved more successful and satisfactory.



## VII.

# UNDER THE CROWN, 1859-1915.

By the close of 1858 the mutiny was suppressed, and for the next half-century India, as an integral part of the British Empire, enjoyed such internal peace, security and prosperity as she had not experienced for over twenty centuries.

In the subsequent wars in China, Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Egypt and Burmah, Sikh soldiers under British officers everywhere distinguished themselves, not less in isolated detachments. History relates the work of the Guides, Piffers, 14th, 15th, 45th Sikhs, the 23rd and 32nd Mazbi Pioneers. The detachments that held to the last at Saraghari or died with Cavagnari at Kabul. Cavagnari had an escort of two Sikh companies of the Guide corps under Lieutenant Hamilton, Mr. Jenkins, a civilian and Dr. Kelly. Attacked by about five regiments of Afghan infantry, with six guns and some thousands of the mob from the city, they held the small walled enclosure from nine till two, and at last, refusing to surrender, the survivors were smoked to death in one

of the towers. When I visited the enclosure, I could not put my hand on any spot unmarked by bullets.

The Bengal army that mutinied in 1857 was almost entirely composed of Brahmans, Rajputs and Moslems, recruited in what are now the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Despite the name, there was probably never a single Bengali in the militant ranks of the Bengal army.

On the reorganisation of that army, these classes were replaced by Sikh, Punjabi Mahomedan and Pathan regiments or companies, which, with the regiments of the Punjab Frontier Force, provided for a large number of the troops enlisted after the outbreak of the mutiny. But there was necessarily a large reduction in the total strength. Many were provided for in the Civil and Military reorganised Police of the Punjab, others found employment in the Police of the Andamans, Hong Kong, Singapore and other British possessions. Many returned to their villages and settled down there.

During the years of internal peace that followed, the military spirit of the bulk of the Jat Sikh peasantry, and still more among the Khatri Sikh townfolk, gradually weakened. It would probably have died out entirely, and the whole Sikh community have reverted to Brahminical Hinduism, but for the British officers in the Sikh regiments of cavalry and infantry, and the small armies of the Phulkian Sikh States. Even for these Sikh regiments, recruiting was becoming so difficult that it became customary for the *Granthis*, or chaplains of the Sikh regiments, to tour through the



Sikh Infantry.

districts where Sikhs were still numerous, recruit lads of about eighteen to twenty-two years of age, bring them to regimental depots, and there initiate them, by the *Pahal* ceremonies of Guru Govind, into the spiritual body of the Khalsa.

In the towns the military spirit was lessening even more rapidly than among the peasantry.

As elsewhere throughout India, Government and Christian mission schools and colleges were founded in Lahore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Gujranwala, Rawal Pindi and other Punjab towns. To these the peasantry were, as a rule, reluctant to send their sons, as after receiving an "English education" few returned to their villages, and all disdained to do any kind of "manual labour." But the sons of the trading Khatri townsfolk filled the schools, all desirous of obtaining Government employment if possible. Fortunately the members of the Sikh aristocracy soon saw the benefit of obtaining a high-class education for their sons. In this they were encouraged by the Government Civil Services and the English and German professors of the Educational Department.

With the help of the enlightened rulers of the Sikh States, the Sikh Sirdars and the Babas who had taken the place of the Gurus as spiritual leaders of the Khalsa, a Khalsa college was founded and endowed, in which the reading of the Granth, and the daily prayers from their sacred volumes, were obligatory. A great Sikh revival followed, stimulated by an excellent translation into English of the Granths by Mr. Macauliffe, of the

I.C.S. A committee of educated Sikhs founded a "Khalsa Divan," or Committee, of which Sir William Rattigan, K.C., was elected President, showing that the movement was at first pro-British.

After Sir William's retirement, disputes arose in the Committee, chiefly on sectarian questions, and the college was fast going to ruin when, on the advice of a prominent Sikh prince, the Government took over the management and the college was renovated.

Some years later, when a combination of circumstances had weakened Sikh loyalty to the British Government, this was denounced as an interference with religion.

Naturally English education had spread over a wide field in Madras and Bengal before the Punjab came under British rule, and many fine scholars gained even European distinction in many walks of life. But for many years after the great Mutiny of 1857-8, the terrible events of those years, and still more the dread of what might have occurred but for British troops, made Bengalis most loyal subjects.

It was during those years that the Brahmo Somaj, founded by Ram Mohan Rai, and extended under Keshab Chander San, based largely on Christian ideals and western civilisation, found many adherents among the cultivated classes, not only in Bengal, but among large numbers of the Bengalis in the Government and other services spread over Northern India.

Calcutta being the capital, the seat of the supreme Government, the large offices and other establishments of the various Secretariats, the Military Accounts and

other branches were almost exclusively filled by English-speaking Bengalis, noted in those days for their loyalty, ability and close application to the performance of their duties. Others qualified in England for appointments in the higher ranks of the Civil Services. Some had risen to high rank, especially on the judicial side of the administration.

Between the British and the higher classes of Bengalis in the Secretariats in Calcutta and Simla, there were reciprocal feelings of respect, and as close an intimacy as was possible while Hindu caste prejudices were still strong

Somewhere in the seventies, a group of Bengali and other Indian gentlemen formed a kind of Association bent on furthering the prospects of advancement in the Civil Services and in drawing more cordially the relations between "Europeans and Natives." This was encouraged by some Englishmen who joined the Association, among others Mr. Hume, of the I.C.S., Sir William Wedderburn and others.

In 1880 Lord Ripon, then Viceroy, on, it was said, the advice of Father Kerr and others, proposed to bring in legislation giving further judicial powers to Indians who had attained to the rank of first-class judges and magistrates, which would empower them to try cases against Europeans in their courts. So was framed the so-called Ilbert Bill. Innocent in itself, if properly introduced, after its provisions had been published and explained and public opinion obtained. As too often is the case, the measure was introduced before any

explanation, before the European community was prepared for it, or the native communities either. Knowing how notoriously corrupt were most of the native courts at that time, the European community, especially the planters, subordinates in mercantile firms, and British soldiers, felt that they were being placed at the mercy of any scoundrel who could purchase false witnesses at 4d. a head, before judges who would take a delight in convicting and punishing Europeans if only to show their newly-gained power. The Bill was passed—but giving the power to try Europeans to judges of the first grade only, and then with a jury.

The storm was allayed, but the bitterness was long a-dying. The war would have killed it but for the Montagu Chelmsford reforms, which have revived it to an intensity only surpassed by the bitter hatred for each other by the several Indian communities, brought to boiling point by Mr. Montagu. One of the immediate results of the Bill was the conversion of the Bengali association into a political congress, which, assuming the name of the National Congress, gradually drew within its folds all English-speaking malcontents and eloquent gas-bags from all the large towns of India, who, overcome by the "exuberance of their own verbosity," paved the way for denunciation of all things British and the spread of sedition among the town mobs. Ever increasing in numbers, in violent and seditious speeches, unchecked and uncontrolled by Government, it has at last, and again with impunity, dared to preach independence and hoist a national flag

to replace the Union Jack, in Amritsar, under police protection ! Knowing full well that if the British army left India to-morrow, every man of them would have his throat cut.

Their chief dupes and supporters have always been the students, who, having been educated in the Government and Mission Schools, have failed to secure appointments in the Government service, and the boys still in school. A result largely of the system of education during the last half century, in which, by their English and German professors and teachers, they were told much of their rights, but nothing of their duties and responsibilities.

Among the students who completed their education in France, Germany and the United States, especially members of the legal profession, were many who considered that they could only secure what they considered their rights by violence, and, taking lessons from Ireland, Egypt and elsewhere, started disaffection by virulent letters to the vernacular and Anglo-vernacular papers, whose Editors soon realised that such articles made their papers more popular among the half-educated communities in the towns.

Among the thousands of students past and present in the colleges and schools these found many willing dupes, who thronged to hear seditious speeches at mass meetings in the towns, and among the rough and illiterate factory and mill hands, among whom were many always ready to cause disturbances and riots, during which they secured loot.

Numbers of the students, who on leaving school or college, were unable to find Government appointments, turned to the lower grades of the legal profession, and as pleaders, vakils, etc., thronged the courts of sub-magistrates in town and country, and encouraged litigation among the illiterate peasantry, not confining their attentions to Bengal, but spreading into the more northern provinces.

For some years they found few followers among the educated classes, but in the early years of this century, Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, affected the separation of the N.W. Frontier Province from the Punjab, and for administrative purposes divided the overgrown province of Bengal into two, Eastern and Western. The bulk of the peasantry and townsfolk of Eastern Bengal are Moslems; of Western they are Hindus. Between the two there has never been any sympathy or fellow-feeling. Among the upper classes a feeling of antagonism, owing to the larger share of Government appointments, and the legal work in the courts in the Eastern districts, as well as in the High Court in Calcutta, being monopolised by Brahmans and Kyashts. The so-called partition in no way interfered with the administration of Western Bengal, and was hailed with delight by the Moslems. But the influential members of the Calcutta Bar considered it threatened their monopoly of fees and other advantages, and their newspapers were soon filled with seditious ravings and abuse of the British, and most violent speeches were publicly made to mass meetings of

students, schoolboys and mill hands from the factories, always ready for mischief.

Assassination and violence was openly preached, and this was soon followed by the murder of some English officials, Indian policemen, detectives and witnesses against criminals in the courts, in many parts of the province and even in other provinces. The assassins and conspirators took as a war cry the *Banda Mataram* (slaves of the Mother) which had been that of the Thugs or stranglers who had infested the highways for centuries, before the British suppressed them, and yearly murdered hundreds of traders and pilgrims with their families, as sacrifices to the goddess *Kali Mai*, or Black Mother, to whom they had been dedicated at birth.

Kali Mai is one of many names given to a wife of Siva, the second person in the Hindu Trinity, and the patronness of murder, smallpox and other evils that afflict humanity. She is the special patronness of Calcutta or Kali Ghatta (the name of a landing-place at a ferry over the Hooghly) near a noted temple of that goddess. When the question of the meaning of the words came up in the High Court, counsel for the defence argued that they meant slaves of the Motherland, and the judges accepted that definition !

In spite of the opposition it had been publicly announced by the Viceroy, presumably with consent of the Secretary of State, that the partition would not be rescinded. So the agitation continued.

Had the discontent and disturbances been confined to Bengal and the Bengalis, drastic measures could soon

have brought submission and order. But now, from various quarters, more violent and abler demagogues came to the front. These early saw that if a spirit of revolt could be started among the more virile natives of the north, especially Sikhs and other Punjabis, and a mutinous spirit among the Indian troops, much might be gained.

Prominent among these were members of the Mahratta Brahmans of Central and Western India.

Mahratta Brahmans had been the chief advisers of the several Mahratta Kingdoms and Principalities raised from the territories of the decadent Moghal Empire and the lesser Rajput states since the days of Sivaji. They held all the most lucrative and important posts in the courts of the Peshwas at Poona, of the Bhonslas at Nagpur and others, and were noted for their political ability and powers of intrigue. Their successors fully believe that but for the British advent, a great Mahratta Kingdom might now be dominant in India, and were and are the most implacable enemies of the British. They ignore the fact that before their hordes came in contact with British troops, owing to their attacks on the Nizam of the Deccan and Nawab of Oudh, allies of the East India Company, their finest army, under Holkar, had been disastrously defeated at Panipat by the Afghans, and that if the British protection was withdrawn, or even relaxed, by the interference of an Indian Legislature, the Afghans, not the Mahrattas, would sweep through the country. What the fate of the Hindu intelligentsia would then be may be foreseen

by the events of the Moplah (Moslem) rising against the Hindus in 1921-22.

Many of these Mahratta Brahman malcontents joined the Arya Somaj, and soon dominated that society.

About the middle of the 19th century, as previously mentioned, Ram Mohan Rai started a movement to purify Hinduism from many evil practices that had become customary under the Brahmanical domination, such as idol worship, child marriage, infanticide, suttee and forbidding widows to remarry. His followers, under Keshab Chandar Sen, formed a society known as the Brahmo Somaj, which endeavoured to form a religion largely based on Christian ideals and western civilisation. For a time large numbers of Bengalis in Calcutta, and scattered in the large towns of upper India, mostly as Government employees and schoolmasters in Government and Mission Schools. At length Orthodox Hindus, especially Brahmans and Kyashts took the alarm, and a new society was formed, known as the Arya Somaj, whose object was to revive Hinduism on the teaching of the early Scriptures, the Vedas and Vedantas, and denounce western civilisation.

At first a purely religious body, it soon got infected with political extremist opinions.

Influential branches of the society were formed in several large cities. Those at Delhi, Lahore, Amritsar and other Punjab cities offered a wide scope for the malcontent leaders and intriguers who joined its ranks from among the Mahratta Brahman community. It

now only needed a Sikh element to make the efforts of the several conspiracies being hatched against British rule to become dangerous.

It has been mentioned that many Sikhs had joined the police forces in the Straits Settlements, in Hong Kong and China, and others had settled there and in Japan. In succeeding years hundreds of Sikhs and other Punjabis migrated to the Pacific States of Canada and the United States, where in time they formed large communities, most of whom had ceased to observe the rites and ceremonies of the Khalsa, and later became more or less discontented with the immigration laws, and other Government regulations. Here Indian malcontents found a ready field for their teachings, where they could abuse all things British and spread lying accusations against the Punjab Government with no fear of contradiction or consequences.

At San Francisco a Gadr (revolutionary) society was formed and a Gadr newspaper published.

The immigrants were men of fine physique, but mostly illiterate and credulous like all other Indian peasantry.

They were constantly being informed of acts of British tyranny in India, and that the Punjab authorities were steadily endeavouring to suppress the Sikh religion and confiscate the lands and wealth of the sacred temples at Amritsar and elsewhere. When they had been sufficiently saturated with these lies they were told that the British Raj was shaken to its foundations by Hindu and Moslem revolts, and advised to return to

their homes and re-establish once more the once powerful kingdom of the Khalsa.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, thousands of miles of good roads, railways and canals had been spread over India. Along the banks of the canals, especially in the Punjab, millions of acres of once forest, scrub and waste lands, had been brought under cultivation. At various centres "Canal Colonies." had been formed by grants of land on easy terms to Native officers and men who had served their time in the Army. From these hundreds of train loads of wheat and other produce were taken to Karachi for the European market. Thousands of pounds sterling in gold had poured into the country and remained there. One of the largest of these was at Lyallpur on the Chenab River, about one hundred and twenty miles west of Lahore. Among the colonists were many Sikhs, and to this colony came several of those who in the early years of the 20th century began to return from the Pacific shore, with rather exalted ideas of their own importance. In 1909, as the value of the land had increased many fold, the Punjab Government desired to somewhat increase the assessments and to issue protective regulations against the sale and mortgage of the holdings to outsiders.

This caused considerable discontent, heightened, no doubt, by the later arrivals. Promptly to the spot came the agents of disorder, among them the noted demagogues, Lajput Rai and Ajit Singh, members of the Arya Somaj. Rioting, accompanied by violent

attacks on the police, plundering and arson, began in Lyallpur and some other districts.

But the Punjab Government had not yet been restricted from governing. The two leaders were promptly arrested and deported to Burma, and soon all was quiet again.

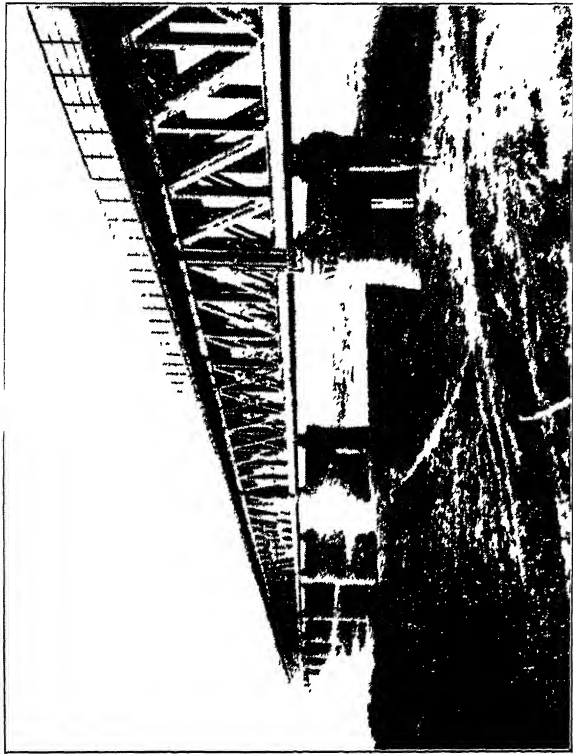
Had these two men been transported to the Andamans and *kept there*, much future bloodshed might have been saved. As it was, on their release shortly after, they revived their evil habits with greater boldness and impunity.

Meantime, murders, assassinations and disorders continued in Bengal and the present United Provinces.

The Morley-Minto reforms did somewhat satisfy the demands of the Moderates for a time, but most of the agitators only clamoured for more. After the suppression of these Punjabi riots, and more drastic measures adopted in Bengal, comparative quiet and cessation of murders followed.

In December of 1911, the great Coronation Durbar at Delhi was held. The vast array of Indian princes and rulers who attended to do homage and attest their loyalty to the King Emperor and Queen Empress in person, together with the hearty demonstrations of joy and loyalty by the peasantry everywhere, showed that the great heart of the real India, the princes and peasantry, was still devoted to the British rule and trusted in British protection.

As elsewhere, there are always good and bad characters among the peasantry, the latter given to rioting,



Sutlej Railway Bridge.

burglary, cattle lifting and other crimes, often resulting in murders being committed by one lot, and avenged by other murders: faction fights between members of different communities and castes, and between landlords and tenants. But up to the close of the 19th century there were very few attacks on Government officials, except in Bengal. Intercommunal and village fights were looked on as family affairs, against the law, of course, and therefore liable to punishment. But as against the British Government itself, or British officials, there was little ill-feeling. Rather the other way. The British Sirkar was their protector, the British officers their *Ma Bap* (Mother and Father) to whom they looked for impartial justice and aid when calamities fell on them; famine, plague, cholera, etc.

The princes, both before and after the Durbar, were determined that no conspirators should disturb their authority or the peace of their States, and knew how to do it.

At the Durbar it was announced that His Majesty had decided to rescind the present division of Bengal. It came as a thunderclap on India. Once more the clamour of a few hundred Bengal lawyers, moneylenders and convicted seditionists and their newspapers was taken to be the voice of India's three hundred millions, of whom probably two hundred millions neither knew nor cared where Bengal was, and half the remainder—the Moslems—were indignant. The various seditious elements were jubilant. If a few hundred effete Bengalis could terrorise the great British Government into sub-

mission, what might not a combined attack effect ?

The whole of India learnt that even a Viceroy and Secretary of State could be coerced. The *Iqbal* was shaken if not lost.

Hitherto the Moslem community as a whole had taken little part in the conspiracies, outrages or riots. But there have always been some able men of that religion among the enemies of the British.

Some had already got in touch with the Turks, and were ready to support the Sultan Abdul Hamid in his endeavours to start a pan Islamic combination against the Christian countries. Much indignation had been felt and expressed, in that England had not assisted Turkey in the Balkan and Italian Wars. The malcontents felt their time had come. Some were in communication with German authorities in Berlin. These prominent men now started a campaign against British rule, in their newspapers, edited by Zafar Ali, Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali.

They were soon in communication with the Gadr Society in San Francisco and the Arya Somaj in India. A web of conspiracy extended over three continents, with agents in almost every large city between San Francisco and Tokio: the principal interior centres being London, Berlin, Geneva, Constantinople, Cairo, Baghdad, Lahore, Amritsar, Calcutta, Bombay, Poona, Ahmadabad and Shanghai. Emissaries from the Sultan arrived in Kabul, Peshawar and Lahore, and in every cantonment from Peshawar to Calcutta attempts were made, not always without success, to rouse a mutinous

spirit among the Sikh and Punjabi regiments. In Bengal, Bombay and the United Provinces, riots among factory hands and the lower classes of the towns, and assassinations by revolutionaries with bombs recommenced. The latter culminated in Delhi in December, 1913, when a Bengali student, disguised as a veiled Mahomedan woman, threw a bomb at Lord Hardinge, wounding him and killing an attendant, and later a bomb was thrown in Lahore, where it was hoped a number of officials would be gathered, but only a Chaprassé was killed. The sixth—seventh of April was appointed for a general mutiny in all cantonments from Peshawar to Delhi, to start by shooting the British officers and seizing forts and arsenals. It was hoped that invasion by all the N.W. Frontier tribes would occur as soon as the Mutiny was announced to them.

But the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab had obtained full information of the plot, and the whereabouts of the conspirators: a number of the latter were suddenly arrested, during the night previous to the day fixed for the rising, and the whole thing failed. How many lives of British officers, and the honour and lives of English women, were thus saved is incalculable.

The expected invasion by the Frontier tribes, and attack on Peshawar and Kohat by Afghan troops, was prevented by the Amir Habibula, who kept his subjects well in hand until his assassination in 1919.

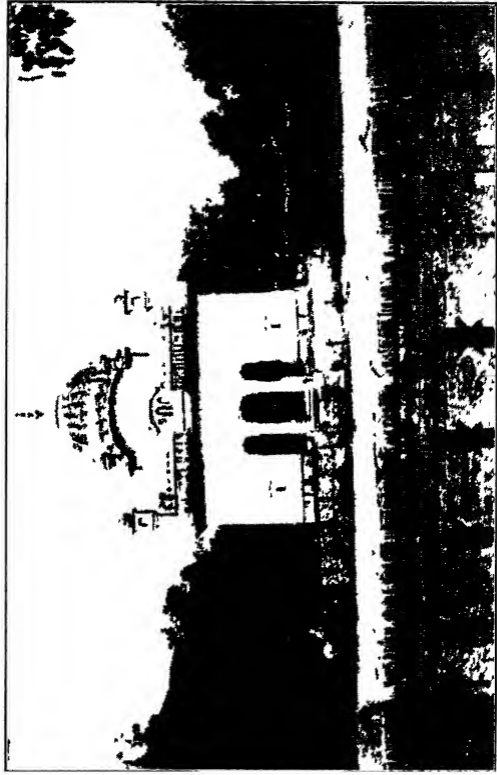
Nowhere had there been any sign of an outbreak among the peasantry of the Punjab.

The members of the Gadr Society in America, Berlin

and Constantinople were warned, early in the year 1914, that war between England and Germany would be declared in a few months. Thousands of Sikhs were flocking back to their homes. When the Great War started, to the amazement of the conspirators and others, the Indian troops in the three Divisions that started for France, the Lahore and Jullundhar from the Punjab, and the Meerut from the United Provinces, marched with enthusiasm to entrain for Bombay. How well all, the Sikh regiments not excluded, fought and died under the Union Jack is known. How the Indian princes came forward, placing themselves, their wealth and their troops at the service of the king is historical.

After the departure of the three fine Divisions, with full equipment, to the seat of war in France and Belgium, the Imperial Government in Simla rested from its labours and went to refreshment.

Not so all the Provincial Governments, nor the conspirators. The returning Sikhs from the far east and west fully believed that the end of the British Raj was approaching. A Sikh named Gurdatt Singh determined to defy the Canadian Government by landing a party of Sikhs from the east in Vancouver, in defiance of the immigration laws. He chartered a Japanese steamer and sent on board 400 men, mostly Sikhs. On arrival at Vancouver, only a few of the party were allowed to land. The rest had to return, and, continuing their journey, arrived in the Hooghly late in September. Fortunately an Act had just come into



**Saraghari Sikh Memorial, Amritsar.**

force enabling authorities to examine, and, if necessary, intern, arrivals from foreign countries. Orders were issued to prevent the party from entering Calcutta, and to entrain them direct to the Punjab. On arrival in the Hooghly, the emigrants refused to obey these orders, and this resulted in a struggle between the police and emigrants. By some carelessness many of the latter had retained revolvers, and used them, killing and wounding some police officers and men. Fortunately a few companies of British infantry had been brought up in case of necessity arising for their assistance. On their approach the emigrants broke and fled, and scattered over the neighbouring villages. Many were captured, but the greater number found their way back to the Punjab, and there joined by other bands, they terrorised the province for some months; attacked and burnt police and railway stations, plundered villages, held up trains, murdered many subordinate officials and others believed to be loyal to the Government. At length, on the invitation of the Lieutenant Governor, Sikh and Mahomedan notables exhorted the villages to resist the rebels, who were then hunted down, captured or slain. Some fled into the United Provinces, and continued their terrorising career there at the expense of their countrymen. It was well that the Sikh and Moslem princes were loyal supporters of the Government and of law and order, as were the Sirdars and influential landed proprietors, who kept the bulk of the peasantry hostile to the rebels.

## 72 RELIGION AND SHORT HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

Once again Sir Henry Lawrence's views, and those, later, of Sir Robert Sandeman, proved true :

“ Keep their natural leaders loyal and the peasantry will be loyal.”

## VIII.

### 1915-1917.

By the close of 1915, the Indian Government, like the rest of the world, realised that the western European powers were fighting for their very existence.

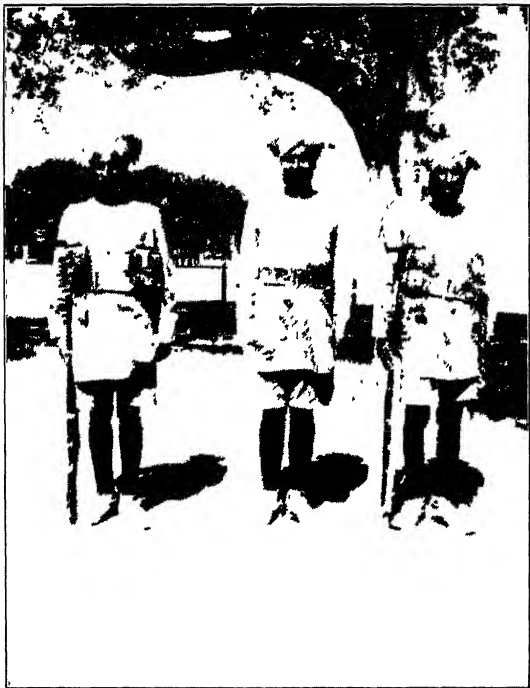
When Turkey joined the central Powers, Moslem agents and Indian conspirators spread through Afghanistan and India. Soon reports were spread that England was bent on destroying the Khalifat, and the Holy Cities were in danger. But Britain was exhausted. This was the time for Hindu, Moslem and Sikh to strike for liberty; the British Army has been so depleted that any prolonged stand by it, scattered as it is, is impossible. The whole civil white population will be at your mercy to slay and the women to dishonour.

The weakness of the British garrison in India, until the arrival of the grand territorial regiments, was too true. But for three factors, the conspiracy may have succeeded. First, the Indian princes, especially the Sikh states and the Moslem rulers, were loyal to a man. Second, Amir Habibullah, of Afghanistan, not only

fulfilled his obligations to the British, but sternly forbade any of his subject tribes to cross the frontier. And third, and not the least important, was, the large Moslem population of the Western Punjab, the peasantry and their chiefs and influential men, have, ever since the annexation of the Punjab, been the most loyal to the British, of all the peoples of India. They immediately realised that the war with Turkey was political, not religious, and continued to join the colours in thousands. The bulk of the Sikh and Hindu Punjabis also were content under British rule. Only in the large towns, where the Congress leaders, Arya Somajists and Mahratta Brahmans, had many adherents, was there any real unrest. The tremendous rush to join the colours, and march under the Union Jack wherever needed, stopped the rebellious conspiracy for a time.

It is interesting to study recruiting statistics between the years 1915 and 1918. Recruiting was absolutely voluntary, and during the first three years of the war no special inducements to enlist were offered. Subsequently, pay and pensions were increased, widows and orphans of the fallen and disabled provided for, and grants of land given as rewards for special services, and large remissions of revenue made in districts like Rawal Pindi and Jhelum that were depleted of almost all their able-bodied men. Over a million and a quarter of Indians crossed the seas during the war in the militant ranks, besides thousands more in the transport and labour corps.

It is interesting and instructive to examine somewhat



Coke's Rifles.

in detail the numbers who joined up from different parts of the country.

From Independent Nepal came 80,000 grand Gurkhas. From the lower Himalayas, between Nepal and the Indus, came high-caste Hindus, Garhwalis, Kamaonis, Dogras, probably some 20,000. From the North West Frontier tribes, Pathans about 10,000. From the Punjab western districts not less than 200,000 Mahomedans—two districts alone sending 60,000 out of a population of 500,000. Sikhs, probably 30,000 out of a total community of about three millions, including women, children and non-militant sects, and another 100,000 from the Jats and Rajputs and other Hindu Punjabis. Several fine Mahratta regiments were formed in the later years of the war and fought well.

Practically the whole of this army was composed of agriculturalists, very few townsfolk joined up even in the Punjab cities.

During the war, the Bengali leaders demanded the right of Bengalis to be recruited for the army, none having hitherto served in the "Bengal Army." The privilege was granted. With difficulty, from the twenty-three millions of Bengalis, one battalion of 500, mostly Moslem students, was embodied and sent to Mesopotamia, but it was recommended that they should as much as possible be kept out of danger, lest heavy casualties might damp the rising military spirit of Bengal! They were.

In Lahore, an endeavour was made to form an Officers Training Corps from university students to qualify

them for commissions in the Army. Out of 2,000 students, 70 offered to join! One small battalion was eventually raised and later became a Territorial Unit.

The thousands of English educated "Intelligentsia," or Bhadra log, scattered throughout the cities of India from Peshawar to Cape Comorin, Congress Wallas, Mahratta Brahmans, Arya Somajists and the Khalifat Moslem league, did their utmost to retard and discourage recruiting, and to spread disaffection among the townsfolk, while princes, landholders, Talukars of Oudh, Punjab Sirdars in the villages, and Zamindars generally, not only collected recruits, but gave freely of their money and possessions; the city bankers, money-lenders, lawyers of all grades and influential residents, if they subscribed any money at all, did so to the seditionists. Of course, there were exceptions, but on the whole, the legal and moneyed townsfolk did all they could to thwart the Government, and the Vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular newspapers continued to inflame the people against everything British.

In spite of these evil influences, the bulk of the peasantry, especially in the Western Punjab, remained loyal. Saddened by the heavy losses of husbands, brothers and sons, they were proud to hear of the brave deeds of their kinsfolk, which raised the *izzat* (a comprehensive word, including prestige, honour, influence and good luck) of those at home. The Sikhs were specially proud of the grand stand and fall of the 14th Sikhs at Gallipoli.

The large sums of money remitted to their homes by



**Punjabi Peasant Women.**

the soldiers afforded some consolation, as did the pensions awarded to widows of the fallen ; the rewards granted for good service at home and abroad, and in some districts large remissions of revenue or land taxes. In 1917, not only in the Punjab, but among all martial races, recruits were pouring in in larger numbers than ever, and at least among nine tenths of the peoples of India, final victory for the British was longed for and expected. All were looking forward to the day when they could settle down again in peace and security under the British Raj, and once more have their respected, if not loved, *Sahib log* amongst them, dispensing impartial justice and aiding them in times of famine, plague, cholera and other evils.

By the powers conferred by the Defence of the Realm Act, and in places by Martial Law, some of the more violent of the instigators of rioting and rebellion had been convicted, and others imprisoned or interned. Among others were Mrs. Besant ; the barrister Gandhi, who, after successfully causing trouble in South Africa, had come to India, assumed sanctity and started his propaganda for " non-violent revolution " ; Dr. Kichlow, from Berlin, and others, Moslem and Hindu. Even the towns were comparatively quiet.



## IX.

### 1917-1919.

IN May, 1917, when every patriotic Englishman was anxiously watching the dread struggle in France and Belgium, Mr. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, under Mr. Lloyd George, chose the moment for bringing before the distracted House of Commons his Resolution to extend Self-Government in India.

In November he went to India, and presented to the Viceroy his wildcat scheme of Diarchy and Representative Government, prepared by a man, who, like himself, knew nothing of India, nor could speak a word of any of the hundred languages.

He may probably have known that one third of India was ruled by some hundreds of native princes and nobles, all having Treaty rights, some governing provinces as large as England or Ireland, who had almost without exception proved their loyalty and devotion to the Crown and Empire during the war. Possibly he was aware that three hundred millions of the peoples of India were agriculturalists, from whom a million and a half had joined the Army. He probably knew, also,

that from the ranks of the intelligentsia in the towns, hardly one man had afforded help in any way, many of them had done their best to discourage recruiting, many had openly preached sedition, and several had been tried, convicted, and punished for inciting mobs to murder, plunder and burn, etc. Yet only from the intelligentsia did he call men to his Councils, treat them with lavish courtesy and eulogised the most dangerous and unscrupulous of them as his friends.

It was decided to form Legislative Councils for the Viceroy and Governors, largely by election, and elected Representative Assemblies, also to replace as many Englishmen as possible by Indians in the services. All the most important of the new appointments were given, not to the men who had done good service to the State, but to those who had openly or secretly opposed the Government.

In a year, Mr. Montagu and his colleagues threw away the results of half a century of the hard work and sacrifices of hundreds of better men than they. He took advantage of the Armistice in November, 1918, to release all "political" prisoners, without making any attempt to obtain from them promises of amendment. What better proof could be given to town mobs and peasantry that the British Government was determined to make over the country to Indians and approved of the doings of the revolutionaries? The very loyalty of the peasantry made them submit to the demands of the demagogues. It was *Sirkar ki hukm* (Government orders).

In a few weeks members of the revolutionary societies, Congress wallas, Mahratta Brahmans, Arya Somajists, Khalifat Moslems, Gadr Sikhs, were scattered over British India from Cape Comorin to Peshawar and Burma, only waiting for a signal and watchward to start Gandhi's "non-violent revolution."

During the war, the Defence of the Realm, and other similar Acts, had several times enabled the Indian Government to check and suppress insurrectionary movements and arrest the ringleaders. After the Armistice, it was considered inadvisable to retain the special powers given by these Acts. A committee of experts, British and Indian, under the presidency of Sir Sidney Rowlatt, Judge of the High Court, was nominated to draw up a fresh bill, by which conspiracy and rebellion could be checked or punished, but one less drastic than the previous acts. It became known as the Rowlatt Bill, and was submitted to the Legislative Assembly for approval and rejected unanimously by that body, the Moderates not daring to approve of it for fear of the extremists and their press. The National Congress met at Delhi, and among other resolutions decided to intensify propaganda against the Reforms and the Bill throughout the Punjab. It was reported and preached in every town that the Rowlatt Bill, if passed, would give authority to the police to prevent any gatherings even for worship, that they were authorised to arrest any four people seen together on the streets, and that the Bill gave the police authority to enter private houses, even into the Zenanas, the

women's apartments, in search of suspected people. Everywhere the same and worse tales were spread openly, without check or denial. Only the torch was needed to set the Punjab in flames.

Early in March, 1919, Mr. Montagu's "friend," Gandhi, arrived in Delhi, and ordered a "non-violent" cessation of all work and closing of all shops on the 30th March, unless complete Swaraj—self-government—was granted. *Orders* to the same effect were signalled by the Government telegraphs to all cities in the Punjab.

On the morning of the 30th March, bands of the scum of Delhi, headed by students from the colleges, started out to see that the order was obeyed. Open shops were attacked, shop-keepers assaulted, fighting started, the police were not numerous enough to disperse the mobs. By evening the whole city was in a state of rioting and fighting. Large numbers of people were injured, some killed, and an enormous amount of plundering done. Gandhi wept and fasted, and ordered another Hartal for the 6th April, the day fixed for a general rising. In Delhi more violent disturbances started on the 6th April, and went on almost unchecked for weeks.

Instead of bringing a few companies of British troops, which would at once have sent the mobs to their dens, the civil authorities opened a conference with the leaders of rebellion! The news spread like wildfire—the Government had ceased to act. Similar disturbances to those at Delhi occurred in all the large cities, not only in the Punjab, but at Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmadabad, etc. But in the Punjab, the outbreak had

been skilfully organised. Police and railway stations were stormed and wrecked, telegraph and telephone lines cut away, railway trains derailed and passengers robbed, in some cases murdered, the victims being, in some cases, European officials and travellers.

The populace were exhorted, in posters and speeches, to murder all Englishmen and dishonour all Englishwomen, and so get rid of these devils.

In Lahore, where the Lieutenant Governor was, riotous mobs were advancing on the civil lines, where were several hundred English and Anglo-Indian families, when the Governor called for troops and made over the charge of the situation to the General, and with full consent and approval of the Viceroy in Council, proclaimed Martial Law, and soon put an end to disturbances at the capital. The worst crimes and disorders occurred at Amritsar, the Holy City of the Sikhs, in which, however, few, if any, Sikhs took part. On the 10th April mobs led by members of the Arya Somaj and the college students attacked and burnt three English banks, killing five Englishmen with repeated blows from staves, left an English lady doctor for dead in the streets and tried to kill another who was saved by a shopkeeper. The police were driven with loss out of the city, the seventy Englishwomen and children were hurried into the fort, where was only one company of British infantry. Troops were summoned from Jullundhar, but owing to the tearing up of railway lines, only small parties arrived, just in time to turn the mob.

Brigadier-General Dyer was now placed in command and ordered to suppress the riots. On the 12th he marched through the streets with a strong escort, and by beat of drum and posters forbade all mass meeting and platform speeches, plainly stating that such meetings would be dispersed by force if necessary. Next morning he was informed that a mass meeting was to be held in a Bagh in direct disobedience of orders. Marching there about 4 p.m., with only 50 Gurkha and Punjabi soldiers fully armed, and 25 Gurkhas who had been passing through on leave, with their kukris only, he suddenly, on emerging from a narrow street, found himself facing a mob estimated at from 6,000 to 20,000, mostly armed with *lathies* (5 ft iron-shod staves) being harangued by the same men who had caused the murders two days before. One at least had been in Moscow.

There was no time to hesitate, he at once opened fire, and after some 300 had been killed, the mobs disappeared. That night Amritsar was quiet. In four or five days all rioting in the Punjab ceased. The Punjab was saved, and with it, India, and thousands of British and Indian lives. So pleased were the Sikhs, and the loyal section of the townsfolk of Amritsar were so grateful at the cessation of plundering, arson and murder, that the Sikh section invited Dyer to join their community and initiated him with the sacred Pahal rites.

He had the approval not only of all his civil and military chiefs, but of all in India who had feared a

repetition of the horrors of the Mutiny of 1857, on a larger scale.

Within a fortnight after General Dyer had suppressed the riots in Amritsar, disturbances ceased throughout the Punjab. Roads and railways were again safe for travellers. Peace was restored only just in time to allow troops to be mobilised on the N.W. Frontier, to meet Afghan armies hastening to invade the Punjab. The Amir Habibullah had been assassinated in February, and his younger son, Amanullah, had usurped the throne. In April, without provocation or warning, sent troops to attack the Khyber, Kuram, and Waziristan. On the 10th May, Lord Chelmsford proclaimed war. The force advancing against the Khyber was defeated and driven back towards Jellalabad. An Afghan army, under Nadir Shah, then Commander-in-Chief, now King of Afghanistan, marched through Waziristan and besieged the small frontier fort of Thal in the Kohat district, held by a small body of Indian infantry. To relieve the fort, only a small column, a few companies of infantry, with a few guns, was available, of which General Dyer was placed in command.

Reaching Thal by forced marches in the scorching heat of May, Dyer attacked and defeated the Afghans, and drove them across the frontier. Shortly after Amanullah sued for peace, which was granted, together with concessions and honours, which enabled him to claim a victory and raise a column in Kabul to commemorate it.

It is evident that at the time General Dyer's action

at Amritsar was considered necessary and correct by the highest authorities in India. Some months later, when fears of rebellion and invasion were passed, the leaders of sedition in India, and sympathisers in England, started a campaign in the press and on the platform against the Amritsar "massacre" Mr. Montagu, annoyed that his reform schemes had been delayed, ordered a committee of enquiry, with Lord Hunter as President. Among the members were some Indian lawyers known to be hostile.

A year after the Amritsar troubles, and an impassioned speech in the House of Commons by Mr. Montagu, in which he expressed deep regret for the dead rioters, had not a word of sympathy for the unarmed English bankers beaten to death with clubs, or the English nurses, on their errands of mercy, barely escaping with life from a similar fate, General Dyer was removed from his command, and other officials, British and Indian, punished for doing their duty at the risk of their lives. Finally, in an English court of justice, an eminent judge declared that General Dyer had been unjustly punished by the Secretary of State for India. But the mischief was done. Within a few months the consequences of this injustice reacted on the Government when the Moplah (Moslem) attacks on the Hindus in southern India cost thousands of lives before they were suppressed. Not nearly yet has it ceased to bear bitter fruit.

## X.

1920-30.

UP to the close of 1919, the bulk of the Sikh gentry and peasantry, and even townsfolk, remained loyal to the British Government. Some of the Sikh gentry in the towns had joined the Arya Somaj, others had been implicated in the Gadr Sikh revolt, and some were prominent in the Congress. After the promulgation of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, and the appointment to high office of many of those who had been the avowed preachers of sedition, a feeling was engendered among leading Sikhs that the only way to secure a portion of the loaves and fishes of office was to join in the opposition to all Government measures. The leading malcontents, with these additions to their body, encouraged by the mulder, not to say, weak administration of the new Governor of the Punjab, restricted as he was by instructions from higher authority, considered the favourable opportunity had come to start their campaign. But to do this effectively funds were needed. Where could these be more easily and lawfully obtained than from the wealthy Mahants of the various

temples of the sectarians, and of the Golden Temple at Amritsar ?

As mentioned in a previous chapter, several of the sons of Nanak and other Gurus, who had not been successful in being appointed or elected as chief spiritual leaders, seceded with some followers from the main body and started sectarian societies, generally of an ascetic or monastic character, forming midway groups between Sikhism and Hinduism, of which the largest were the Udassis, who, though declared heretics, were still held in much respect, as having been founded by a son of Nanak.

These several societies, and, later, other sections of Sikhs, had built temples at various places held sacred as having been the birthplace or cremation sites of Gurus, or as sites of notable events in their lives. To these shrines, or *Guru dwaras*, as they are called, lands had been allotted from time to time and money donated. As years went by, the extension of railways, facilities for trade and general security had largely raised the value, and income, of these lands. The Mahants, or high priests, of these Gurudwaras, according to Hindu custom, should have been succeeded by *Chelas*, or chosen disciples, not by their own sons or relatives.

After the British occupation of the Punjab, a record of village rights and tenures, with lists of landowners and tenants, had been made for assessment of revenue, and to prevent future litigation as much as possible. The bulk of the peasantry, used to far other methods of assessment and settling of disputes, did not realise



**“Angrez hun jande, pinshun kithu ande?”**  
**(Now the English are going, whence are pensions**  
**coming?)”**

the value of these operations, under the new régime. During the years of turmoil and religious laxity, several of the Mahants married and adopted their own sons as Chelas, and as their successors as Mahants and occupants of the temple lands, and these were registered as proprietors in the settlement records, as the offices had in many cases become hereditary.

When the Sikh revival started towards the close of the 19th century, charges were brought against several Mahants of using the income from the produce of the lands, and from pilgrims' donations, for their own, not religious, purposes. Some were accused of leading licentious lives; some had permitted smoking in the sacred precincts, had engaged dancing girls, and had even placed idols in the temples near the sacred Granths. Before the war, requests had been made to Government to appoint officials to investigate these charges and redress evils. As usual, the Government declined to interfere in religious disputes, but appointed a non-official Sikh Committee of management.

When, in 1920, the taunts and flatteries of the leading seditionists had begun to take effect among large numbers of the community, they decided to take possession of the *Takht*, the most sacred portion of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, and, having done so, they formed a self-constituted committee under the name of the *Shrimani Gurudwara Parbhandak*, or committee of Gurudwara management, and decided to take forcible possession of all Gurudwaras. They assumed the title, style, tenets, black turbans and other symbols of the

*Akhalis*, who had formed the bodyguard and were the most truculent of the followers of Guru Govind. The Akhalis were the dominating factor in the Khalsa Army committee that caused the ruin of the Sikh monarchy after the death of Ranjit Singh, and in the decade after the great Mutiny of 1857, caused serious disturbances in Lahore and Amritsar, when a party under the name of Kukis murdered the Moslem butchers for cow killing, and attempted to capture the fort of the Moslem Nawab of Maler Kotla, on which occasion, it may be mentioned, the British official who suppressed the revolt was punished.

In January, 1921, they took forcible possession of a shrine at Taran Taran, near Amritsar, two men being killed in the *melée*. The government now decided to assist in the solution of the sectarian differences, but before anything could be done, the Akhalis decided to take possession of the very sacred shrine known as Nankhana, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, to which were attached lands from which a yearly income of about £25,000 was derived, and of which the Mahant was a notoriously bad character, though recognised as the leading Mahant of the Udassis. Though the Government apparently knew nothing of the intended attack, the Mahant had been warned, and had applied for a police guard, which was not sanctioned on the ground that it was a purely religious dispute. So the Mahant collected a band of armed ruffians, partly Pathans. When the Akhalis had

entered the walled enclosure, the gates were closed and the whole band of 130 men were shot down and cremated. Government, roused at last, arrested, tried and hanged or transported several of the murderers, but the Mahant was released by the High Court on the plea of having acted in self-defence! A committee was formed by Government to manage the affairs of the shrine, but this was objected to by the Parbhandak, who had now secured an army of martyrs and funds for political propaganda. There followed the disgraceful riots in Bombay during the Prince of Wales' visit, which, but for the action of Government, would have been repeated elsewhere. The conspirators returned to Amritsar and demanded the keys of the Golden Temple. The manager made over the keys to the Deputy Commissioner, but by orders of Government—the Viceroy or the Secretary of State? a British official was ordered to go to the temple and hand over the keys to the exultant Parbhandak! Further acts of violence followed throughout the Punjab, and at last a military display was made which at once brought a cessation of trouble.

A few months later the Parbhandak started afresh and determined to seize another shrine known as the *Guru ki Bagh*. The Mahant had agreed to let the Parbhandak manage the shrine affairs, but this body sent a band to trespass on the estate and cut away the trees. The Mahant brought an action for trespass, and the police, after a scuffle, ejected the intruders. The Parbhandak called for Akhali volunteers, and a gang

of about 100 men were sent to occupy the land, but there was to be "no violence"—the new Gandhi watchword when inciting to sedition. These volunteers simply sat *darshan*, squatted on the ground or cut trees. The police rounded them up, sticks were used on both sides. Those volunteers who had been slightly injured were paraded in carts as martyrs, while fresh gangs, chanting hymns, took their place in the garden, to be in turn ejected by the police or put in prison for trespass, till at last some 5,000 of them had been interned, many of them old sldiers. A letter at the time in the *Pioneer* (Allahabad) by a retired native officer, stated that having been called on to assist in the duty of reformation of shrines, he had collected 4,000 old soldiers and marched them to Amritsar. On arrival he found that the real objects of the Parbhandak were political, not religious, so he marched his men back to their homes and dispersed them. It was also reported that after the second or third gang arrived, the leader arranged with the native police officer that the police were to order the Akhalis to leave, then shout and make a great dust by beating the ground with their *lathis* (staves). The Akhalis were to cry out and groan and be carried away in carts as martyrs; thus no one would be hurt, both sides satisfied and the Sirkar know nothing about it. This answered very well at first, but unfortunately some British officials came on the scene and spoilt the whole show. Finally it was announced that a retired Punjabi engineer, named Gangu Ram, had leased the land and thrown it open to the public. This nonplussed

the conspirators and quiet returned for a time, but the evil spirit was not subdued.

A few years later the misconduct of the Rajah of one of the Cis Sutlej Sikh States forced the Government to order him to abdicate. His young son was placed on the *Gaddi*, and the state was placed under the administration of a council nominated by the Government under the guidance of a British political officer.

The affairs of the State had no connection with the Sikh Parbhandak in Amritsar, but some members of that body decided to interfere. Large bodies (*Jathas*) of Sikhs and others under the Akhali banners, marched in semi-military style across the Punjab, and endeavoured to take possession of the State seat of Government. They were met on the boundary of the State by State troops, and ordered to keep away. The British officer went forward to try and open a parley; a rush was made to kill him, but he rushed back just in time. The troops opened fire; the mob dispersed and scattered over the country for some weeks. Fresh bands of non-violent pilgrims came on the scene, but at length, making no impression, the game ended.

Meantime, there had been a change of Governors, and the next five years were, in comparison to the régime of the previous one, years of peace.

Another change, and once again we see the Punjab thrown into disorder by permitting that pernicious body, the so-called National Congress, to hold a meeting in Amritsar in a style more suitable to a Viceroy's Durbar Camp; a republic openly proclaimed and a

“National Independence flag” replacing the Union Jack. But for the police, loyal Sikhs would have wiped out the camp.

What good is a Government that will not govern ? that will not let its loyal officers do their duty, that will reward sedition and play cat-and-mouse with criminals ? What is the use of a British steel frame if two thirds of the steel supports are replaced by unreliable material and the other third not firmly fixed in their places ?

All political parties in India are now awaiting the publication of the Simon Report and the subsequent scheme for the future government of that empire. What is that scheme to be ? It is awaited with the wildest hopes by comparatively few enemies, whom no concessions will placate, and a far larger number of misguided patriots. These hopes will be disappointed, and the disappointment will convert many of these misguided patriots into implacable foes. Further it is awaited with deepest misgivings by millions of Indian patriots, who love their country and yearn for a government which will govern and bring back peace and prosperity. These fears are shared by those, whether British or Indian, who have spent their lives in the service of India, and have a deep admiration, the former for her many splendid races, and the latter for those who have hitherto guided her destiny. But can any man who is not blinded by party prejudice doubt the irresistible conclusion afforded by the history of the last two months ? The intrigues, the lying propaganda, the riots and murders still in progress in several large

cities, instigated by the National Congress and other seditious societies—the proposals made by the Indian commercial community of Bombay to debar British shipping and sailors from the Indian coastal trade—the boycotting and burning of British and foreign piece-goods, so that the millowners may sell the inferior products of their mills to the peasantry at higher prices—the encouragement of strikes in order to reduce wages—the repeated efforts to incite troops and police to mutiny—the attempts to induce the wild border tribes to invade and carry havoc into British villages—do not these all prove that the Indian “intelligentsia” of the towns are absolutely unfitted for self government or Dominion status ?

Perhaps not a single murderous riot would have occurred this year but for the wide-spread and largely credited rumour that no British or Indian official civil or military would order the troops to use their rifles or bayonets to suppress riotous mobs for fear of being “thrown to the wolves” later to appease the unappeasable.

The way in which British and Indian soldiers and police—many of the latter high-caste Hindus—have been compelled to submit for hours daily to the indecent abuse of themselves and their female relations and to showers of missiles without being permitted effectually to defend themselves has been both humiliating and disgraceful. It is astounding that so far only some 50 high-caste Rajputs have resented this treatment. But there is a limit to endurance, and it must nearly

have been reached. Nothing but the devotion of the Indian rank and file to their British officers can have restrained troops and police from avenging these insults. Is it not time that the Viceroy should, in the words of the Bengali patriot Rai Bahadur Banarji of Dacca, send troops everywhere to restore order "so that they may feel that they are still living under a British Government." (vide The Times May 27th 1930.) But when has the viceregal office been subjected to such a humiliation as to be exposed to dictation by notorious revolutionaries, or begged by Indians adequately to defend the loyal subjects of the King-Emperor?

Opinions may differ as to the action to be taken after the publication of the Simon Report, but all must agree that the future welfare or ruin of the Indian Empire hangs in the balance. Is loyalty in the past, or sedition conspiracy and murder to be rewarded? The leaders of the loyal peasantry, or of the revolutionaries to be placed in power? Is the British steel frame to be strengthened or scrapped? Is it to be an *Angrez ki Raj*, or a *Brahmani-vakil ki Raj*? From the latter may God save India.

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